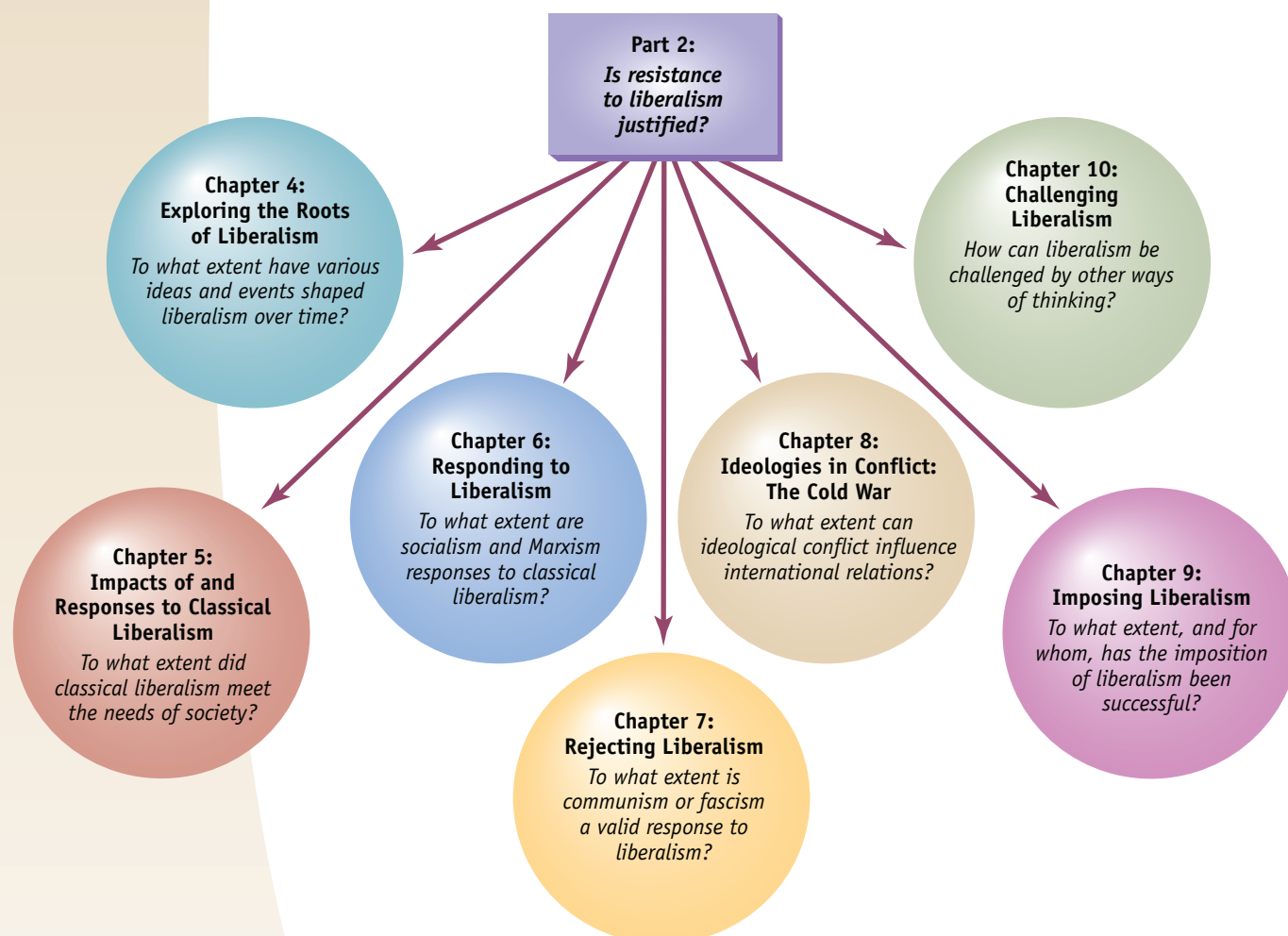


# Challenges to Liberalism

In this section of *Understandings of Ideologies*, you will examine how different groups of people responded to classical liberalism. Some people wanted to gradually adopt new ideas into classical liberal thought. Others wanted to replace most of classical liberalism, but in a peaceful way. Still others used violence to break completely from classic liberalism.

Liberal societies have been forced to respond as well, and in some cases they have defended liberalism as strongly as those who wanted to change it. The result has been ideological conflict and tension—between and within countries.

As you read earlier, The Key Issue for this course is: *To what extent should we embrace an ideology?* The Related Issue for Part 2 will have you investigating the question: *Is resistance to liberalism justified?* Part 2 deals with the challenges to classical liberalism. Once you have explored these challenges, you will be better equipped to answer to what extent liberalism is justified.



*Over London by Rail* (1872) is a wood engraving by French artist Gustave Doré. It depicts families living in the tenements of East London with a steam locomotive passing by in the background. Doré often showed the effects of the Industrial Revolution on labouring men and women who found it impossible to escape poverty. Sometimes he was criticized for being too gloomy in his works. What impact does this painting have on you?



To help you begin to explore these issues in Part 2, consider the following ideas about ideologies and liberalism:

People can sometimes expect a lot from our ideologies. They expect ideologies to make sense of human nature, politics, economics, religion—even their relationships.

Ideologies can be used to try to explain what has gone on in the past, and to offer a new vision of the future. Ideologies can bind people together as a group because they share common values and beliefs, but they can also divide people and cause hardship and conflict.

At times, ideologies can be strict and unbending. At other times, they can be more flexible and adjustable. An ideology can change, adapt, and even contradict itself just like people can. There are some people who cannot accept uncertainty in an ideology because ideologies are supposed to make sense of the world. These people might argue that if an ideology can constantly change depending on the circumstances, then what good is it? As a result, these people may argue that when ideology can no longer make sense of the world, it must be “thrown out” as no longer useful.

The ideology of classical liberalism was put to the test during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries. Great Britain in particular operated politically and economically according to the beliefs of classical liberalism and there were a great number of people who suffered as a result. There were some who managed to gain fortune and fame while many lived in the city slums and worked under horrible conditions in the factories, mines, and farms.

As a result, there were calls to address these issues by changing how the ideology of classical liberalism was being practised in society, especially economically. The economic system and role of government in many Western societies were affected by these changes. With these changes in mind, how would you respond to the following issue: To what extent is it the role the government to address issues of inequality in society?

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Visit the LearnAlberta.ca website at [www.LearnAlberta.ca](http://www.LearnAlberta.ca) and select Social Studies and Grade 12 resources; then, select the *Understandings of Ideologies* digital resource for fully interactive learning scenarios entitled ExCite (Exploring Citizenship). These scenarios are directly related to the issues and concepts and the four parts in the Student Resource to enhance learning.

